

The Rise of the Internet Driven Artist

by

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Introduction

When was the last time that you saw someone gain fame simply overnight? The creation of social media has expanded the boundaries for the possibilities for an average artist to succeed. It is because of these new boundaries, that so many people have been able to rise to stardom and take their own careers to new levels. An artist can create, share, and connect like never before with the almost instant communicative technology available today. This collaborative system allows artists to learn and expand off of their peers as well in order to create something fresh and universally valuable. Art has no longer become intimidating or “elite”, instead it is welcoming to anyone with passion and creativity. Social media encourages people to find their own success with the tools they have by learning and sharing with those around them.

History of Social Media

Media is ever expanding, and advances in technology have allowed it to grow and develop since its earliest beginnings. From the creation of recorded music on the phonograph, to the invention of compact discs and MP3's, media has grown to become more accessible than ever before. The invention of a new digital age has set about a new language for sharing and creating amongst all artists online. With the click of a button, an artist can view the latest works of their peers worldwide and share their own creations in a second. The creation of social media has expanded the known world of invention and creation among artists and has allowed for new forms of art to be unraveled and created.

In his book, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*, Jose van Dijck draws a line between the split in subcultures amidst the invention of computer technology

for social purposes. Dijck outlines the evolution of the internet from an intimidating form of technology to a social community for anyone to be a part of. From its beginnings, the World Wide Web began as a technological tool for what Dijck describes as the “geek subculture” which included technologically-inclined young people interested in the vast expanses of this new creation. From this point, the World Wide Web began to expand and develop into online communities that would eventually form the foundations for Web 2.0. The expansion and growth of computer technology from being only a one way platform for users to insert information online, eventually shifted to becoming an interactive tool amongst users. “The growth of social media platforms was (and still is) innocuously conflated with the rise of Web 2.0, and the participatory potential of social media was sometimes erroneously attributed to the web’s technological design” (Dijck 10). This relation to the growth of online technology with strengthening of online communities is what has created today’s online social climate. Because of this, the internet has grown to host communities for virtually any person pushing the internet towards an entirely interactive environment.

Social media has its roots within the 1990s, and the expansive technological revolution that occurred through computers and social sites. According to a study conducted by We Are Social and Hootsuite, roughly 60% of the world is online and interacts with social media today, and those numbers are always on the rise as technology and media become more and more available to everyone. Each social media site has its own unique purpose and creative interface that differs from the rest and makes it unique. Social sites such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vine, MySpace and Instagram all have their own distinct appeals to users. Some sites have lasted

longer than others as new sites have been created with easier-to-use interfaces. Anyone can login, create, and share their story through social media.

Nowadays, social media can be used in order to share art or music with hundreds of thousands of people who can access it at the tap of a finger. Namely, social sites such as YouTube and Twitter have created an equal opportunity-based system of sharing, for anyone and everyone to spread their work online. In defining success as being able to gain a strong following, being able to reach a large number of people and engage with audiences, musicians have ample resources online. As a result, one might say it is easier now more than ever for an independent artist to gain attention and fame simply by posting their work to the internet. Artists can share and collaborate with each other through these social sites and can gain experience and inspiration from others online. Artists can also be inspired by what is popular around them, which not only includes artistic and musical trends, but also from different social trends within these sites.

With the political, economic and social movements that are so abundant in today's culture in America, it is not hard to point out various trends among these different areas of our society. These trends can often dictate how our daily life is carried out and establish the climate for social interactions in certain situations. It is not uncommon for art in America to adapt and produce itself based on different movements within society. Art has taken the form of numerous social, political and economic ideas throughout history, but how have similar trends on Twitter and YouTube affected these works of art?

Social activism in music is something that has been around since the creation of music and lyrical song writing. Music is as much a form of free speech as any other and allows musicians to give word and melody to what they observe around them. Popular musicians within the past century and up to the present have had an enormous spotlight when it comes to any issue they choose to make into music. The more popular an artist is, the bigger the spotlight and the farther the reach and impression that musician has on others. This means that popular musicians have a major influence on not only fans and their direct audience, but also on other smaller musicians who idolize these stars and what they have to say. It has become easier in the 21st century for this influence to spread around the world and even easier for that influence to actually be heard with the help of sites like YouTube and Twitter. Musicians have incredible power to influence and create thanks to social media, allowing them to be seen and heard any time no matter how big or small they are.

With the creation of social media, millions of talents, trends and creations are easily available in an instant making it so easy for an artist to be inspired by what they hear and see. Art is constantly being circulated and influenced by people, and social media makes this whole process that much more convenient. For those who are independent and seeking to make a name for themselves, this process is crucial. Nowadays it is not uncommon to see a “self-made” artist make it big because of social media. So how does this process affect the artistic and creative drive for these independent artists?

Positive and Negative Social Media Trends

Trends on social media are ways for internet users to stay up to date with what their followers and the whole world find popular and exciting. These trends have affected not only how each site is used, but the overall content of the site as well. For example, trends in hashtags such as #MeToo. or #BLM (Black Lives Matter) have been encouraging internet users to focus and contribute more to these ideas by liking, retweeting, reposting and etc. As with new social movements, socially charged artists have always written or created art based around difficult political, social, or economic themes in their time. Musicians have used their own music to express their views and worries about the world with their listeners; now that an artist's work is so easily accessible, his/her opinion is readily available for anyone to hear. Musicians in the past who have taken an activist role within their songs are Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and N.W.A. who wrote about corrupt times in America and the changes they wanted to see in the world. Activist musicians today would include artists like Beyonce, A Tribe Called Quest, and Gorillaz who have all used their talent with music to spread a deeper message about the state of America and the world today. Music has become such a strong tool within the past century for musicians to share and express their beliefs. This tool has only grown stronger with the advent of social media, giving musicians a chance to have their voice heard no matter what scope of popularity they have in the mainstream industry.

YouTube and Twitter have been used by musicians as a basic and raw form of music sharing. As long as an artist has the means to record themselves and post their work online, they can get their work out to as many people as possible. Tools such as YouTube live streaming are used in order for musicians to create a live conversation with their audience and put on a mini

concert over the internet and have become more and more popular within the past few months. During the Covid-19 outbreak many musicians have stepped up to use social media as a tool for breaking the barrier of social distancing and use it as a way to unite talent with audiences for special live stream performances. Artists from Lady Gaga to Quincy Jones to Questlove and The Roots have done and are planning to enact live musical performances where audiences can engage and message participating artists and gain some entertainment while in quarantine. Some of these events have transformed into fundraising events for healthcare workers and towards financial contributions towards other musicians.

Twitter allows any musician or fan to gain access to the world and start a connection. Twitter is an excellent platform for a musician who wants to give audiences a look into their own personality and gain access to a part of them that no one would be able to see otherwise. These platforms are being used more and more by all levels of musicians, whether it be to promote an album, converse with fans, or share a new project. In conversations with independent musicians, most of them said they used social media to gain attraction before the release of a new song or album by posting clips, graphic design from the album, or featuring themselves in some way discussing their musical project over Twitter and YouTube.

It can be argued both in favor, and against social media and its influence on the creative drive of independent artists. On one side, it can be argued that trends on social media in fact hinder the creative drive of artists, because there is less of a motivational force to be different and pursue a unique path within their own passion. A trend or trends in art can often deter an artist from being original in order to make a profit and gain popularity within their own artistic collective. This process can be overwhelming for someone looking to be an individual within

their own medium. The use of technology, however, can be damaging to an artist's work. Not all artists have time to pursue an education or purchase expensive equipment to create their art or invest in crowdfunding campaigns. Instead a musician will work as a social and economic barrier between artists and the audience they are trying to address. This can actually separate an artist even more from his or her surroundings by making it that much more difficult and out of the way to reach.

On the other side of the argument, there are a variety of creative outlets for specific forms of art and it is easier now than ever for something/someone's art to become well known and used to influence others through social media. This process also allows artists to take trends into their own hands and create something individual to what they are basing their work on. These trends, while spanning across hundreds of millions of people online, can also be an opportunity to network and connect for these independent artists as well. While one person may be inspired by another's work, it can be an opportunity to make connections and perhaps start a significant art process and career.

YouTube and Web 2.0

Web 2.0 Simply refers to the interactive and participatory websites online that rely heavily on their user-generated content. Web 2.0 allows users to form relationships with others and essentially build their own profiles by creating and sharing with others online. YouTube is one of the most popular Web 2.0 sites online right now and because of this it is one of the most popular forums for people to place their ideas, feelings and other personal works online. Whereas

the beginnings of the internet were static and simply a one-person posting, Web 2.0 allows for social networking. So how does this affect how artists create and share their work with others?

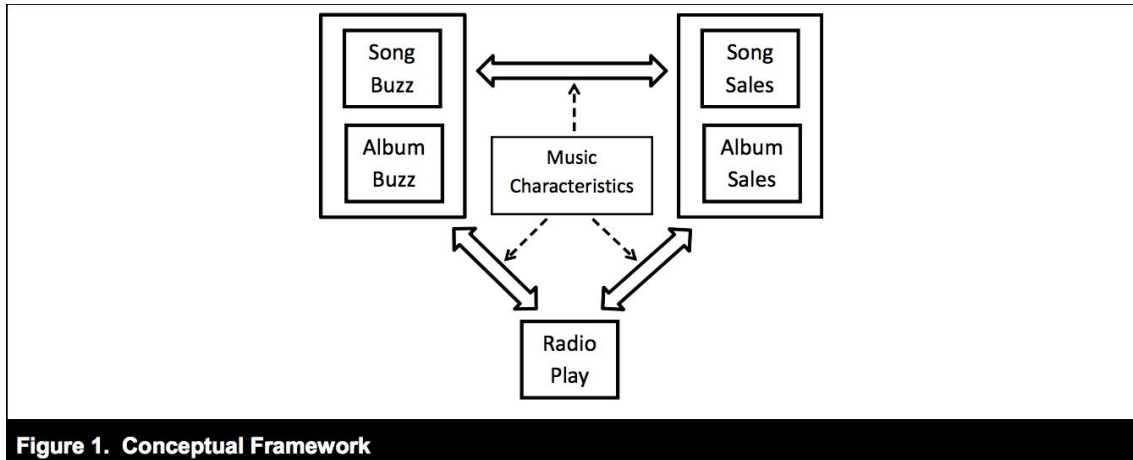
In the times where physical copies of art and music were most popular, musicians had the issue of distribution and being heard. Independent musicians had the struggle of not only creating content that was noteworthy and interesting to everyone, but also the struggle of promoting themselves and finding an avenue to be heard. An artist would have to record themselves to a physical medium and sell/promote themselves as much as possible in order to maintain a career and a respectability amongst others. With the change of distributing platforms from the back of an artist's car trunk to the forefront of the internet, an artist's reputation is easier and more profitable to establish.

In an article by David Beer entitled, "Making Friends with Jarvis Cocker: Music Culture in the Context of Web 2.0" Beer describes how not only the relationship between the internet and musicians has changed, but how musicians' relationships with audiences has changed as well. "There is a perception of (popstar) accessibility, or a perception of proximity, that is being cultivated here that fits with the broader rhetoric of democratization and participation that has ushered in Web 2.0" (Beer 232). Beer describes the way that accessibility to popstars and icons has grown over the past years and how it is easier now than ever for a fan to directly contact one of their idols through Web 2.0. This ease of interaction also contributes directly to the musician's creative output as well. Artists are in the direct line of feedback from their audiences and fans and can tailor their work to fit their fans needs as well as take any means necessary to remain in the spotlight. This applies to both artists on a professional level as well as an amateur level when

interacting with their fans and creating content online. Feedback and social networking are essential in today's day and age of creating art and content that is both exciting and meaningful.

Beer describes all the different contributing parts of Web 2.0 and music as a "Global Culture Industry" with different "objects" that contribute towards the functionality of this global industry. These different parts being each musician and their fans as well as the Web 2.0 intermediary such as YouTube that creates a diverse global social network. "These objects have a life, a vitality that we can track and that can be used to understand the relations between culture and capitalism in the contemporary era" (Beer 225). Web 2.0 allows artists to observe their surroundings and gauge what is popular and meaningful versus what is not. This intermediary tool offers independent musicians with the opportunity to market themselves to best fit their audiences.

Sanjeev Dewan and Jui Ramaprasad outline the factors of music consumption and how each avenue of consumption compares to the other (I.e. traditional media compared to "blog buzz" or new media). As shown below, factors such as how much attention or "buzz" a song receives, how much it is played on the radio and streamed elsewhere, and how much each song and album sell all contribute to the characteristics of effective music marketing.



There are multiple factors that contribute to the overall success of music as well and multiple avenues for audiences to discover these musicians. Dewan and Ramaprasad further explain the differences between consumption of mainstream versus more “niche” music and that relationship between digital and physical listening. Dewan and Ramaprasad outline the main sources of music consumption based on each type of music (mainstream vs. niche). The table below outlines their model of consumer consumption for each music category.

Table 1. Primary Modes of Music Discovery and Consumption		
Consumption Preference	Albums	Songs
Music Preference		
Mainstream	Traditional Media	Social and Traditional Media
	CD's	Digital Downloads
Niche	Social Media	Social Media
	CD's	Digital Downloads

In the case of this model “traditional media” refers to radio and music streams. While this study and diagram are dated, it still shows how important social media and digital downloads are for “niche” and independent artists. The primary mode of consumption and discovery for these

artists outside of the mainstream and not associated with a record label is through social media and digital downloads from sites like YouTube and Twitter.

So, what exactly makes an online musician successful? The main measure of success I will be focusing on is the amount of views a musician receives and how high engagement is on all online posts. The number of views a musician receives on a post directly correlates with how much a post is shared online and how many people see the post. The more views a musician gets on their work, the more likely they are to reach a diverse audience that will share their work with others. Similarly, the amount of engagement on a post also correlates with how many people are directly viewing and interacting with the post. Engagement is the measure of interaction and affect a post has on its audience. Engagement simply means the amount of comments and shares from an audience on a post. The more engagement on a post, the more reach a musician's work has on audiences and the more it helps propel their career. The current age of internet musicians strives to reach the greatest number of views and engagement on each post.

Creativity Connects

In a study titled Creativity Connects, done by the National Endowment for the Arts, the various ways in which creativity is affected by different social, economic and political norms were dissected and researched. It is found that most artists have crossed over into non-art related careers and influences in order to make their art. More artists are found to be investing their time in entrepreneurial careers and education in order to be self-employed. This would work towards the argument that artists would use the trends in social media towards their advantage in their own careers. For example, more and more artists are going to school to receive education in

business and marketing as practical skills to help develop their professional profiles. Artists nowadays also find themselves in different business positions and careers; there are a plethora of artists who own businesses/clothing lines/brands/sports teams etc. By expanding their business horizons to other industries, this also opens a window for musicians to promote and cross market their art amongst a different demographic. These new self-employed, independent artists would be able to manage themselves and would seek to contribute more to the creation and influence of these trends.

Creativity Connects also states that with the overwhelming access to different artistic technology, it is actually inspiring vast amounts of creativity and experimentation within the arts world. As new technology and trends take place, this will inspire the world of future artists to modify and create unique works with the abundant new technology available. More and more the “amateur” independent artists are becoming more and more professional sounding and looking through the use of this technology, which greatly increases the artistic drive for young aspiring artists. Platforms like GarageBand, SoundCloud, and Pro Tools have helped artists of all talents and backgrounds give themselves a professional sounding portfolio. With these an artist has access to professional sounding and looking tools for creation, giving them the drive to create new and individual works. While the acquisition of some of these platforms can cost an artist a large amount of money, they are no doubt extremely useful to artists to create from their own homes. An artist will be more driven to create if they are allowed to sound professional without breaking the bank.

Artists and musicians can easily create and share their work to the whole world. YouTube, SoundCloud and Spotify have become some of the easiest ways to share music with

the world. Most notably, Justin Bieber, was first discovered at the age of 13 over YouTube after sharing videos of him singing. Since being discovered on YouTube he has become one of the top selling, performing and producing artists in the world. Other artists such as Steve Lacy have been discovered after sharing his music over SoundCloud. At the age of 18 he was signed on to work with the band The Internet and has since collaborated with numerous well-known artists on solo and group projects.

Also, according to Creativity Connects, the ease and effortlessness of distribution is another factor that would contribute towards the artistic and creative drive as well. Since a song, painting, poem, etc. can be shared instantly online, it is that much more desirable for an artist to produce as much as they can to reach as many people as they can. Even the smallest of artists can acquire a fan base around their own work, and this will oftentimes give the artist a sense of responsibility towards their fans by creating as much new work as possible. This gives artists maximum control over their work by removing any middleman involved in the process and allowing them full creative control over how they promote and market their art.

Case Study: Megan and Liz Mace

Professionally known as just Megan and Liz, these two sisters began a musical career on YouTube that has lasted over 12 years and has led to critical acclaim, extensive tours and internet success. Their first video was uploaded to YouTube in 2007 and featured an original song co-written by both sisters entitled “This Note” which began their popularity streak on the internet. Since then they have gained over a million followers on YouTube and millions of views on their channel as well. They have received acclaim and success throughout their career and

have since gained thousands of dedicated followers. In 2012, Billboard Magazine named Megan and Liz one of the 21 under 21 entertainers of the year, stating that the sisters were a “step above the average YouTube phenom.”

Since the release of the first song on YouTube and their first EP, their sound has changed a lot and has developed through multiple different genres. Their sound as a genre has stemmed from country, to pop country, to alternative rock and even electronic pop music over the past 12 years. They have grown more and more dynamic in their musical styles and have since grown to release EPs and Albums that feature these genres. Their style has changed as the trends online have changed. They have stayed true to themselves while also staying relevant in the public eye by changing their style according to the trends online and in pop culture.

Both Megan and Liz credit YouTube as being their main source of stardom when first starting their music career. YouTube provided Megan and Liz with a resource to showcase their talents to millions of users worldwide. Their vast initial success on their YouTube videos allowed them to totally take on careers as full time musicians and begin professionally making music for audiences and touring worldwide. For many other artists platforms like YouTube and Twitter have become their success starting points and helped multiple musicians receive immense attention and appreciation. How does this translate for other musicians trying to make their own success stories and create a large and diverse audience? For most musicians, success doesn't happen overnight, and often the struggle to market oneself on different platforms requires a musician's entire creative effort. Megan and Liz have stated that they owe their career to their start on YouTube and the platform's amazing ability to spread information; however, they have also stated that “YouTube is a great place to grow but not a great place to live”. So,

what does this mean for other musicians trying to start their career on platforms like YouTube and Twitter?

Independent vs. Mainstream Musicians

No matter how accessible and easy social media platforms have made the process of success for independent musicians, there is still a major line between big name spotlight artists and online musicians. At the same time the mainstream music industry is being threatened by the ease and accessibility for musicians to create projects themselves, market themselves, produce their own work and upload their work to streaming services at their convenience. Each pose as a threat to the other as both mainstream and independents fight to create a spotlight while also maintaining creativity and relevance. One of the prominent characteristics of the popular music industry is its focus on the aspect of prediction (Suhr 124).

Mainstream artists (more so than most others) have no choice but to be influenced by what is popular across the industry in order to stay relevant. Suhr describes the music industry as being determined by two factors: the “star” factor and the “genre label” factor. The “star” factor is described as the elements that sell the most music and make a star by measuring the success of past sales in order to guarantee future ones. By tailoring a musician’s past success to future projects, the recording industry can use this to build up an artist’s “star” persona. By creating a successful “star” musician, this music industry can guarantee that each new song will be a hit if the artist’s persona is maintained. The second factor determines success based on the dedication of fans to a specific genre. For example, if a popular Hip Hop artist were to release a new song the “genre label” factor would rely on the steady market of Hip Hop fans to take to the new song

to make it popular. With both factors, it is obvious that most of the music industry shies away from taking major risks with established stars and genres.

Independent musicians and labels are at an advantage from this way of marketing because they do not rely on previous markets or the prior success of musicians in order to be successful. This independent freedom from market research allows musicians to be more creative and experimental with their own sounds. Because of this independent musicians and labels constantly fluctuate in aesthetic, allowing musicians to portray any musical nature they want.

Interviews with Musicians

I interviewed independent artists who commonly use YouTube and Twitter in order to promote their online musical careers to dissect how social media has made this process easier or harder for musicians. Social media is generally described as a tool for musicians rather than a means for creative output and entertainment. Musicians often have to sacrifice their own personal recreation social media in order to dedicate their time towards furthering their career. For musicians this means dedicating 100% of time on social media to promoting and exhibiting their musical endeavors through each platform that they use. Musicians must create visually compelling and strongly recorded material in order to consistently appeal to viewers and schedule when to post in order to best reach their audience.

In my talks with musicians a majority mentioned the idea of balancing individual expression and artistic integrity with popularity. What a musician may have in mind for a project isn't always the most logical step for furthering their career as a musician. When a musician approaches social media, they must adhere to a fine line between their own creative expression

and what will increase their views and engagement. It is important for anyone seeking to advance themselves on social media to keep and continue creative momentum in order to stay relevant with their fanbase.

The subjects I chose to interview came from all different backgrounds and musical levels and all differed in skill level as well. I interviewed students both inside and outside of the Purchase Music Conservatory to gauge the full scope of how social media has affected musicians today. While all had generally the same issues and problems with marketing themselves, I noticed that those in the conservatory had a harsher view on the music industry and what it took to make it as a professional musician. Most conservatory students agreed that the overwhelming popularity for independent musicians today has led to a decrease in talent and skilled drive for musicians. Most agreed that it has become more acceptable and accessible for a non-trained musician to become immensely popular from a simple project that they have entirely written and produced; whereas trained musicians often have to work for years to reach the level they desire in order to break into the public eye and establish major connections. It is easier for an untrained independent musician to overlook the traditional process of learning and being educated in music for performance now more than ever since a majority of independent music can be made in one's bedroom with any skill level musician. This independent process is what I believe makes music more wholesome and individualized by allowing an artist's total control over their own music and musical passion.

My responses differed when I spoke with musicians who were involved in the music conservatory at Purchase College. Conservatory musicians are highly trained and highly competitive when it comes to creating and collaborating for each new project. A conservatory

musician will often train for years before coming to school for music in order to be best equipped with the right musical knowledge to succeed. When I asked most conservatory musicians how they felt about social media use for music creation and collaboration, most gave me a very critical introspective view on the matter. Most conservatory musicians viewed social media to be a great asset to any musician working to promote themselves, however they also viewed social media and the internet as a resource for musicians to get away with easy creations. In other words, conservatory musicians agree that it is helpful for any musician to be able to freely create and share worldwide, but the internet makes creation too easy for untrained independent musicians to come up with a project. Conservatory musicians feel as though independent musicians have too much access to resources that bypass the intense training and theoretic knowledge of most conservatory artists. A musician can look up any chord progression online or search any video on how to create a song, whereas any musician in the conservatory has to train and dedicate their time and studies to mastering their instrument. No matter what level of expertise a musician demonstrates for their craft, every new song is a new form of creativity and collaboration that does take time and effort to produce and share.

Independent musicians are responsible for 100% of the artistic process from creation, to production and distribution. Because of this, more musicians turn to social media (and specifically YouTube and Twitter) for their main platforms of content, creativity and marketing. Musicians striving to form a career online have to be able to give up social media as a leisurely pastime and adopt it as a new medium for their work. It could be argued that this move away from personal recreational social media use has stripped away any individual creativity of an

online musician. By giving up individual expression and personal use on social media, the musician loses that aspect of his/her personality and creative writing.

An online talent will sacrifice the material that they have worked on for countless hours in order to promote material that they believe will get them more views and a higher engagement number on a post. Artists can look on trending pages whether it be on YouTube or Twitter to see what type of content is receiving the most views and gaining the most traction in the art world. From this, a musician can mimic or recreate material that best matches the trending content. Online musical talent such as Megan and Liz are an ideal example of just how much movement there is back and forth for musicians trying to be creative while also trying to remain relevant stylistically. Over the course of their 10 plus year career, Megan and Liz have changed their composition style to match what is mostly trending with audiences.

However, social media is also a powerful tool for connection and networking as well. Musicians have access to other talent all over the world and can instantly see what material other musicians are releasing online. Platforms establish a foundation for connection not only between artists and their audience but also between other artists as well. Where social media lacks in allowing complete individual creative expression amongst musicians, it enhances the ability for musicians to be inspired and inspire others along the way. Musicians can directly interact with their inspirations through platforms like Twitter by reaching out, asking questions and following their tweets. The process of creating and sharing material online has helped to readily inspire anyone who is willing to have an open mind. The faces of talent have been provided with an actual voice behind their work; musicians can add personality and character to their work that audiences would otherwise be unable to see just by listening to their music. This in turn makes

musicians more appealing to audiences based on how charming and personable they are outside of their work. For example, certain artists have started to do different performances online involving parodizing their own work or answering audience questions about their work through chats online. Anyone can stumble upon a new work that they would have otherwise not come across thanks to social media. Twenty years ago, artists only had access to mostly physical copies of music and would generally choose to listen to what was popular. Nowadays, a listener can browse online to discover something unconventional and not traditionally popular thanks to YouTube and Twitter.

When asked what each musician's biggest struggle was in interviews a majority responded that they struggled most with maintaining a strong image for themselves and finding ways to stay relevant with an audience while also consistently being individually creative in the process. This struggle has been shared by almost every independent musician working to make a name for themselves. While resources for inspiration have become more readily accessible for anyone looking to be inspired, it is still up to the artist to take those sources of information and turn them into a musical project that people will enjoy and listen to. Artists are given a variety of tools for their creation which ultimately affects how that creation will end up. It can be argued both ways that this process inherently makes a musician more or less creative depending on how creativity is defined.

Crowdfunding

The uses of all of these online tools can also help a musician succeed without breaking the bank and help most set their career off for the future. In today's artistic climate, things run on

a DIY type factor in almost all mediums of art. Now more than ever, artists have the skills and resources they need to develop a personal identity and set themselves apart from the others. Resources like crowdfunding have also given those who are struggling with the support they need in order to launch a project. It is easier than ever to see a dream realized with the things available to artists through crowdfunding and fundraising. While artists may still struggle with funding their big productions, they can now receive money to make their artistic dreams come true. Some famous artists and musicians have used crowdfunding as well in order to bring their ideas to reality. Musicians like The Pixies have used crowdfunding successfully in order to not only fund their projects, but also market their work to new potential audiences.

While the internet makes creativity and inspiration easier for musicians to create and thrive musically, it does not provide musicians with every resource necessary to get to that point. For someone who has a creative vision in mind and the skills to support that vision, content creation may be left behind due to a lack of useful and functioning equipment. While it is easier now than ever to simply record a project using a laptop or phone, it is also harder for a musician to fund money for production space, musical equipment and adequate distribution materials as well. Crowdfunding makes this process easier by allowing an artist to self-market and fund their projects online through the help of fans and interested donors. An entire project can be funded through online funding which not only allows the creator to receive financial help with their new project, but also help to gain investors and fans who are eager to listen and take part of the project they helped fund.

Musicians have a willing and supportive base on the internet and can take their ideas to new heights that were previously unimagined. The art and music industry have taken a new

meaning to DIY (Do It Yourself). Musicians today have more available resources at their fingertips now than they did even twenty years ago. The modern age has given rise to a new wave of art and artistic creations now that artists are more motivated to produce.

Often, musicians are not able to use this resource right away and instead choose to wait until they have an extensive following, so that they have the greatest potential to reach the largest number of donors possible. It is up to the musician before anyone else to do their best to reach as many people as possible by striving for a large number of views and active engagement with audiences on their work. While crowdfunding is an extremely useful and helpful tool for musicians, it is the responsibility of the musician to create content that people will actively fund and take interest in. As stated earlier the artistic and creative process lends itself to giving musicians the best platform, they need to create a project people will find is worth funding and worth investing time and money into. This process allows musicians the time and funds they need to create projects and perform in front of thousands even within their own bedroom. This resource has also benefited the entire music community throughout times of struggle as well.

Social Media in Times of Crisis

At the time of this paper, the world is in the midst of the global Coronavirus pandemic which has left musicians and venues worldwide without the ability to perform and operate. Musicians have been left without space to perform their music in front of others in a physical space because of the intense restrictions of Covid-19. Music venues everywhere have shut their doors to the public in order to uphold safety standards for their region. Now more than ever, both musicians and venues are looking for funds and the resources from outsiders.

Social media has proven to be an extremely helpful tool in times of crisis by allowing fans to directly interact with their favorite artists through livestreams and funding campaigns. Musicians have started to livestream their songs during times they were scheduled and have spread encouraging information and entertainment for free as shows begin to shut down. Musicians have taken this opportunity to create a discourse with their fans and followers in order to create an atmosphere of hope and endurance. Many venues have reached out to fans and followers as well for financial support as they have faced a major financial blow due to the cancellation of numerous shows.

Musicians have responded to the crisis by creating online events presented as live streams in which fans can interact with artists by commenting and sharing with others. These live stream events give musicians the opportunity to present themselves to audiences raw in front of their laptop or phone screens performing songs or sharing their own experiences with audiences. Musicians can grow their success even online by encouraging fan comments and sharing through their audience in order to spread their music instantaneously. These live streams also allow a musician to add a link to a crowdfunding page to keep their projects intact even without the resources necessary to perform. Now more than ever, musicians of all levels and walks of life have asked for financial support from fans in order to stay ahead during this pandemic.

These crowdfunding pages also allow musicians to link to their own personal websites where they can sell some of their musical works and even link to their personal merchandise as well. Fans seek out more from those that they are inspired by and are inclined to interact through social media and the internet by funding and purchasing merchandise from each artist. Although some of these funds do not go directly into the hands of musicians, funding is essential for these

artists to be able to present their music and recover some of the funds lost after show cancellations. These new avenues have given musicians the opportunity to directly interact with the circumstances faced by everyone around the world. As more and more people come to terms with the severity of the pandemic, more artists take on the responsibility of transforming these circumstances into a composition of songs and performance.

This mostly applies to musicians with an already developed fanbase and large social media following in order to acquire the most support and engagement with their audience; so how does this pandemic affect independent musicians trying to gain success online. Independent musicians need help in a lot of the same ways as anyone else during these times. Whether that be through merchandise sales, funding pages or streaming as much material as possible from each artist in order to support them. In light of the crisis the streaming site Bandcamp has decided to waive its portion of revenue collected from streams in order to allow all funds to contribute directly towards the artist. Constant streaming (no matter how small the amount awarded) is always beneficial to any artist trying to make light of a crisis. Organizations have begun to reach out more to fans in order to fund musicians struggling to make ends meet. Organizations such as the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund have begun work to fund artists who are not yet full time and have perhaps lost their main source of income for their musical projects.

Conclusion

Overall, the creation of social media has sparked a motivation for young and independent musicians, to bring to life new and creative artistic works online. Through media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, musicians are provided with the necessary resources to make their

artistic works known to the internet world. These platforms give musicians from any level and background the opportunity to gain success in their field through building engagement (comments and reactions from audiences) and increasing their internet followers based on each post shared through social media. In turn, audiences are also given the opportunity to gauge a musician's growth and creativity within music, but also gain a look into the artist's personality through their personal comments and reflections within their work. This gives anyone the opportunity to build a distinctly creative online repertoire, and create a successful name for themselves by constructing a strong creative online presence with audiences.

There are however, multiple constrictions that are held over independent musicians online. While social media allows musicians to express themselves personally and as an artist, it can also force musicians to abandon their personal recreation for the sake of being a consistent creative force online. In other words, for independent musicians it is necessary to take on their artistic work online as a full time job in order to be able to reach the widest audience and build their online persona. The music industry both independent and through record labels is highly competitive and demands artists to be extremely driven and focused when producing their work. Because of this it is that much harder for artists to make it into the mainstream of musicians and performers.

Regardless, social media is an excellent resource for musicians to interact with those all over the world, and gain the skills they need to become successful in music. Resources like Twitter and YouTube allow artists to be able to focus on their work while also allowing them to be influenced from anyone across the world. While not every single musician will be the next star social media gives anyone, no matter their background or professionalism, the opportunity to

explore and develop themselves artistically and creatively in the eyes of everyone around the world.

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